



The Regional Municipality of Durham Health Department

NEWS RELEASE

Durham residents encouraged to take precautions against West Nile virus

WHITBY, ON, August 17, 2012 – As more West Nile virus activity is reported in jurisdictions across Ontario, Durham Region Health Department is reminding area residents to take precautions to help minimize the risk of mosquito bites.

While the Health Department has reported a number of positive tests of mosquitoes carrying the virus in southern Durham Region, it's important that everyone remain cautious and eliminate stagnant water around their home to help reduce the development of larval mosquitoes.

“Although Durham Region has not reported any human cases so far this season, we continue to receive notification of adult mosquitoes testing positive for West Nile virus from a number of local municipalities,” explained Laura Freeland, Manager, Environmental Health with Durham Region Health Department. “Therefore, it’s still important for area residents to remain vigilant in avoiding mosquito bites and reducing potential breeding sites around their homes.”

To minimize the risk of mosquito bites and the possibility of being infected with WNV, the Health Department recommends taking the following precautions:

- Wear shoes, socks and light-coloured clothing, including long sleeve tops and full-length pants, when outside especially between dusk and dawn when mosquitoes are most active.
- Use insect repellent containing DEET on exposed skin, following Health Canada’s safety tips on using personal insect repellents. More information on using insect repellents containing DEET can be found in Health Canada’s pamphlet “Safety Tips on Using Personal Insect Repellent” at www.pmr-arla.gc.ca/english/consum/insectrepellents-e.html.
- Ensure that window and door screens are in good repair to prevent mosquitoes from entering your home.

WNV is a mosquito-borne disease that is spread to humans through the bite of an infected mosquito. Mosquitoes become infected by feeding on the blood of a bird that carries the virus. The disease is not passed from person to person or from bird to person. Most people who contract the virus will experience mild illness including fever, headache, body ache, nausea, vomiting and rash on the chest, stomach or back. More serious symptoms can include muscle weakness, stiff neck, confusion, tremors, numbness and sudden sensitivity to light. Symptoms usually develop between two and 15 days after being bitten by an infected mosquito.

Anyone who knows they have been bitten by a mosquito and who is experiencing any of the symptoms described should contact their physician. For more information on WNV, please call the Health Department’s Environmental Help Line at 905-723-3818, ext. 2188 or 1-888-777-9613, ext. 2188. Information is also available at durham.ca.

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Media inquiries:

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Glendene Collins - Health Department 905-668-7711, ext. 2999